

MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

- Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq -

Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad

January 2012

Office of Agricultural Affairs Visit to Kirkuk: Agricultural Counselor David Salmon and agricultural economist John Schnittker visited Kirkuk Province in northern Iraq in mid-January. The main purpose of the trip was to judge planting progress for the 2012 Iraqi wheat crop. Kirkuk is at the southern extent of the northern wheat production region. The trip provided a chance to overfly key portions of the production area and meet with provincial agricultural government officials and private sectors contacts who added official estimates of planted area and opinions on crop prospects. Lack of rainfall during the main planting season, water allocation for irrigation, as well as access to better seed and fertilizers were key points raised by local officials. This trip resulted in an update report on crop progress to USDA in Washington, which projected a crop of 1.87 million metric tons (MMT), 11 percent below last season's crop. Based on this production forecast, Post estimates total import needs for the 2012/13 marketing year at 3.3 MMT.



Certificate of Appreciation to John Schnittker: Agricultural Economist John Schnittker was presented with a certificate of appreciation, by Akram Diwana, Manager of the Kirkuk Grain Elevator. The certificate was presented on behalf of the Kirkuk governor and the Iraqi Ministry of Trade and honored Mr. Schnittker for his emergency feed grain program in 2008/09. This project monetized a large quantity of imported barley, with the resultant funds being used to renovate and doubling the grain handling

capacity of the Kirkuk elevator. The renovation also included a cost sharing arrangement with the Ministry of Trade to install a hydraulic lift for truck unloading. Kirkuk receives approximately 200,000 metric tons of imported wheat annually for blending and distribution to local flour mills.



Iraqi Seed Traders Attend ASTAs 51th Vegetable and Flower Seeds Conference January 21-24, 2012, Tampa, Florida:

Eight prominent private sector seed companies traveled to Tampa and networked with U.S. exporters of vegetable and flower seeds at the American Seed Trade Association's (ASTA) annual event. The delegates met with more than 20 different seed companies and placed preliminary orders to import hybrid vegetable seed to Iraq. Vegetable seeds ordered included hybrid melons, onions, green peppers, tomatoes, lettuce, eggplant, cauliflower, and radishes. This is a move by the private sector to offer top-quality seeds from reputable U.S. companies. Ahmed Al Dahlaki, president of Al Reef Alkadra Co. and

delegation participant noted that he wanted to work directly with U.S. seed suppliers to provide Iraqi farmers with quality seeds at affordable prices. Walid Sharif, Market Specialist in the Office of Agricultural Affairs in Baghdad, organized the trip working directly with ASTA and Iraqi seeds traders across Iraq.

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Video Teleconference Training on Food Safety and Public Health:

21 January: Through a Video Teleconference (VTC) from Michigan State University to a private training hall in Baghdad, Dr. Greg Habing, provided a PowerPoint presentation to an audience of 50 members of the Iraq Veterinary Medicine Syndicate (IVMS) on food safety

and public health. The lecture covered food hazards, “the farm to table continuum”, potential microbial hazards at slaughter, the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system for risk analysis, and tips for safe food preparation. The recorded lecture was presented in Arabic by a member of the faculty from the College of Veterinary Medicine at Al-Anbar University and shared with the 13 Colleges of Veterinary Medicine throughout Iraq and their faculty and students. VTCs are provided on a monthly basis to the IVMS by MSU.



Video Teleconference Training on Artificial Insemination of Dairy Cattle:

24 January: Through Video Tele-Conference (VTC) by World Wide Sires, Inc., to Baghdad, the final lecture of a series of four presentations was made to a group of 28 veterinarians and livestock specialists from the Ministry of Agriculture’s Directorate of Artificial Insemination. During this final lecture a final exam was administered and certificates of completion were distributed to all attendees. The goal of the series of lectures was to train specialists on the evaluation of cows, reading and understanding bull information, understanding the advantages of using proven over unproven bulls, and determining the importance of sire

selection criteria. In addition, the attendees learned about estrus synchronization in dairy cows and factors effecting milk yield and reproduction. This program supports the anticipated change in the Government of Iraq’s policy regarding the importation of animal genetics into Iraq.



Video Teleconference Training on Livestock Facilities and Handling:

28 January: Through a Video Teleconference (VTC) from Michigan State University, Dr. Jason Rowntree, provided a presentation to 50 members of the Iraq Red Meat Association (IRMA) on Thoughts and Information on Livestock Facilities and Handling. The lecture

covered sustainable livestock production, water requirements, forage utilization, fences, shade and design of facilities. The recorded lecture was presented in Arabic by a member of the Faculty from the College of Agriculture at University of Baghdad and shared with 13 Colleges of Agriculture throughout Iraq and their faculty and students. VTCs are provided on a monthly basis to the IRMA by MSU.